

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1607

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EIND, JA

SUBJECT: METRIC SYSTEM FOR LIQUOR BOTTLES

REF: STATE 162269

1. BOTH MINISTRY OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE & INDUSTRY, RESPONSIBLE FOR PRODUCTION SUPERVISION, AND MINISTRY OF FINANCE, RESPONSIBLE FOR TAXATION ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES, TOLD EMBASSY THEY ARE NOT RPT NOT CONTEMPLATING ANY REQUIREMENT THAT BOTTLE SIZES FOR DISTILLED SPIRITS BE CONVERTED TO THE METRIC SYSTEM. PRESENT REGULATIONS STATE ONLY THAT CONTENTS OF BOTTLE, NO MATTER WHAT ITS SIZE, BE STATED ON THE LABEL IN MILLILITERS. THIS IS OFTEN DONE BY IMPORTER ADDING LABEL.

2. BOTTLE SIZES ARE FIXED TO A CERTAIN EXTENT, HOWEVER, FOR BEER AT 663 ML AND SAKE AT 2 LITERS UNDER THE QTE MARUSHO UNQTE SYSTEM. IF A BEER OR SAKE MANUFACTURER USES THIS FIXED-SIZE BOTTLE, IT NEED ONLY PLACE THE MARUSHO SEAL ON THE LABEL AND THE PRODUCT WILL NOT RPT NOT BE SUBJECT TO GOVERNMENT INSPECTION OR CERTIFICATION OF CONTENT WEIGHT. MANUFACTURERS ARE FREE TO USE OTHER BOTTLE SIZES FOR BEER AND SAKE, BUT AS BOTTLE SIZES NOT COVERED BY MARUSHO SYSTEM WILL BE SUBJECT TO DELAY OF GOVERNMENT CERTIFICATION,
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MAKERS VOLUNTARILY USE MARUSHO-SIZE BOTTLES.

3. AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN STATIONED IN TOKYO
REPRESENTING MAJOR U.S. DISTILLED SPIRITS MANUFACTURER
SAID HE HAS HEARD OF NO RPT NO GOJ PLANS TO CONVERT
BOTTLE SIZES TO METRIC SYSTEM, ALTHOYGH HE BELIEVES
THAT THIS EVENTUALLY WILL TAKE PLACE ALONG EUROPEAN
STANDARD, I.E., BOTTLE SIZES ARE 750 ML.

4. GIVEN PRECEDENT OF MARUSHO SYSTEM, ANY FUTURE REQUIREMENT
BY GOJ FOR DISTILLED SPIRITS BOTTLE SIZES MAY BE
VOLUNTARY, IN EMBASSY'S OPINION. GOJ OFFICIALS TO
WHOM WE SPOKE SAID IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO ESTABLISH
BOTTLE SIZES FOR IMPORTED LIQUUORS WHEN THERE ARE MANY
SPECIAL, HIGH-PRICED COGNACS AND SCOTKY IN IRREGULAR
BOTTLE SIZES. EMBASSY THEREFORE BELIEVES THAT IF,
AS AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN PREDICTS, JAPAN SWITCHES
TO METRIC FIXED-SIZE BOTTLE, BOTTLES WHICH MEET
THIS STANDARD AND WHICH ARE LABELED WITH
MARUSHO STAMP WILL BE FREE FROM INSPECTION OF
CONTENT WEIGHT, WHILE IRREGULAR-SIZE BOTTLES
WILL BE SUBJECT TO COST AND DELAY OF INSPECTION
AND CERTIFICATION. THIS ADDED COST WOULD BE MINOR
FOR HIGH-PRICED LIQUORS, WHICH RETAIL IN JAPAN FOR
U.S. DOLS. 50-200, BUT SIGNIFICANT FOR REGULAR-
PRICE LIQUORS.
HODGSON

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